Project Description

CUYAMA RIVER, SANTA MARIA RIVER, ORCUTT-SOLOMON CREEK, AND OSO FLACO CREEK WATERSHEDS AND SANTA MARIA RIVER ESTUARY TOTAL AND FECAL COLIFORM TMDLS

The proposed activity is the adoption of an amendment to the Central Coast Water Quality Control Plan (Basin Plan), to incorporate total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) for total and fecal colform in the Cuyama, Santa Maria, Orcutt-Solomon, and Oso Flaco watersheds. The Basin Plan designates beneficial uses of waterbodies, establishes water quality objectives for the protection of these beneficial uses, and outlines a plan of implementation for achieving and maintaining those objectives and protecting water quality. In addition to establishing TMDLs for total and fecal coliform, this Basin Plan amendment allocates those loads to sources and includes an implementation plan and compliance schedule for reducing pollutant loading to meet the allocations and reduce the concentrations of total and fecal coliform to levels that protect the beneficial uses of the waters in the Cuyama, Santa Maria, Orcutt-Solomon, and Oso Flaco watersheds.

The Cuyama, Santa Maria, Orcutt-Solomon, and Oso Flaco watersheds are located in northwestern Santa Barbara County and southwestern San Luis Obispo County, California. The watersheds are about 50 miles north of Point Conception and about 150 miles south of Monterey Bay on the central California coast. The watersheds include the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes complex.

Beneficial Uses

The beneficial uses for these waterbodies identified in the Basin Plan that are associated with total and fecal coliform concentrations are body contact recreation (REC-1) and non-body contact recreation (REC-2), and shellfish harvesting (SHELL). The Basin Plan contains water quality objectives for fecal and total coliform to protect these beneficial uses. Water quality objectives protective of the water contact recreation beneficial uses are routinely exceeded in many locations sampled in the Cuyama River, Santa Maria River, Orcutt-Solomon Creek, and Oso Flaco Creek. Water quality objectives protective of shellfish harvesting beneficial uses in the Santa Maria River Estuary are also exceeded.

The Central Coast Water Board's goal in adopting TMDLs through this amendment is to eliminate water quality problems cause by elevated concentrations of total and fecal coliform, and specifically to ensure that the levels do not interfere with the attainment of these beneficial uses.

TMDLs

The TMDLs for total and fecal coliform are discussed in the Project Report Section 7. This section contains the technical and environmental characteristics of the TMDLs. The TMDLs for fecal coliform in the Cuyama River, Santa Maria River, Orcutt-Solomon Creek, and Oso Flaco Creek are the water contract recreation beneficial use water quality objectives for fecal coliform and the TMDLs for total coliform in the Santa Maria River Estuary are the shellfish harvesting beneficial use water quality objectives for total coliform. TMDLs are established for the following reaches and water bodies:

1. Santa Maria River: the estuary to Bull Creek Road (312SBC)
2. Oso Flaco Creek and its tributary, Little Oso Flaco Creek, upstream of Oso Flaco Lake
3. Cuyama River: downstream of Salisbury Creek @ Branch Canyon Wash (312SAL) and upstream of the reservoir
4. Alamo Creek: the entire reach
5. Blosser Channel, Bradley Canyon Creek, Bradley Channel, Main Street Canal, Nipomo Creek, and Orcutt-Solomon Creek: the entire reaches
6. The Santa Maria River Estuary: downstream of monitoring site, 312SMA

Recommended Implementation Actions

The Implementation strategy is to target controllable, anthropogenic sources for reduction, and to monitor to see how concentrations are affected. The parties responsible for the allocation to controllable sources are not responsible for the allocation to natural sources. The Implementation Plan identifies management measures addressing each source category and identifies parties responsible for implementing actions to reduce fecal and total coliform loading.

The TMDL will be implemented primarily through regulation via urban runoff via the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) storm water permit requirements, as well as via management measures for grazed lands, small animal operations, onsite wastewater systems, and human waste facility use. Implementation is required pursuant to existing regulatory authority through currently held NPDES permits, Waste Discharge Requirements, and through the proposed Cuyama River, Santa Maria River, Orcutt-Solomon Creek, and Oso Flaco Creek Watersheds Animal and Human Waste Discharge Prohibition. The Project Report Section 7 discusses wasteload and load allocations for dischargers. The amendment establishes allocations that should result in attainment of water quality standards.

The Central Coast Water Board is consulting with stakeholders in developing these TMDLs and Implementation Plans. Implementing Parties may use this environmental documentation and are expected to conduct a more detailed

environmental analysis for specific actions as appropriate. A draft CEQA analysis is presented in the Technical Report Section 11.6. The economic analysis is contained in the Technical Report Section 11.7.

Staff recommends a receiving water monitoring plan for total and fecal coliform that will allow staff to evaluate attainment of the TMDLs and allocations.